

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of indicating a source of a stored message, the method comprising:

5 generating an information signal relating the stored message to at least one graphical image associated with said source; and

10 transmitting the information signal to a communications device associated with an addressee of the stored message.

2. A method according to claim 1, including
15 generating a representation of said at least one graphical image in the information signal.

3. A method according to claim 1, wherein said
20 generating step includes:

identifying a network location where the at least one graphical image can be accessed by the addressee; and

25 generating a representation of said network location in said information signal.

4. A method according to claim 3, including
30 determining a network address identifying said network location.

5. A method according to claim 1, wherein said
35 transmitting step includes transmitting said information signal for receipt by a network resource associated with the addressee.

6. A method according to claim 1, including receiving notification that the stored message has been received.

5 7. A method according to claim 1, including storing the information signal for subsequent retrieval and transmission to the communications device.

10 8. A method according to claim 1, wherein said generating step includes generating said information signal in response to receipt of a signal indicating that the stored message has been received.

15 9. A method according to claim 1, including determining the source of the stored message.

20 10. A method according to claim 9, wherein said determining step includes determining a calling party associated with the stored message.

25 11. A method according to claim 9, wherein said determining step includes determining caller line identification information associated with the stored message.

30 12. A method according to claim 9, including requesting, from a networked device associated with the source, source information for associating the source with the at least one graphical image.

35 13. A method according to claim 12, including receiving the source information from the networked device and producing the information signal in said generating step using the source information.

14. A method according to claim 13, including storing the source information after said receiving step in a

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centrally located network resource associated with the addressee.

15. A method according to claim 12, wherein the receiving step includes receiving the at least one graphical image from the network device.

16. A method according to claim 1, wherein said generating step includes associating the at least one graphical image with a subscriber of a messaging system.

17. A method according to claim 1, wherein said generating step includes identifying a media type of the stored message and generating a representation of the media type in the information signal.

18. A method according to claim 17, including requesting data identifying the media type of the stored message from a network device associated with a subscriber.

19. A method according to claim 17, including encoding into the information signal a graphical image associated with the media type of the stored message.

20. A method according to claim 17, including encoding into the information signal data relating the stored message with a graphical image associated with the media type of the stored message.

21. A method according to claim 1, including transmitting the stored message to a networked communications device in response to a request for the stored message from the networked communications device.

22. A method according to claim 1, wherein in said transmitting step the information signal is transmitted to the communications device of the addressee in response to

receiving a request for pending notifications from the addressee.

23. A method according to claim 1, including providing the source with at least one graphical image relating to the addressee before recording the stored message.

24. A method according to claim 1, including producing in the information signal a digital representation of a sound waveform associated with the source.

25. A method according to claim 1, including retrieving a digital representation of a sound waveform associated with the source and encoding the digital representation of the sound waveform in the information signal before transmitting the information signal to the communications device.

26. A method according to claim 1, including generating within said information signal a representation of at least one video frame from a stream of video data associated with the source.

27. A method according to claim 1, wherein the stored message includes a stream of video data and said generating step includes producing within said information signal a representation of at least one video frame from the stream of video data.

28. A method according to claim 1, wherein the stored message includes a stream of video data and said generating step includes extracting the at least one graphical image from the stream of video data.

29. A method according to claim 1, including sending a control signal to a network resource for instructing the network resource to add at least a portion of the information represented within the information signal to a web page accessible to the communications device.

30. A method according to claim 29, including notifying the communications device of a pending notification on the web page.

31. A method according to claim 1, including receiving a caller line related signal identifying subscriber information associated with a caller line from which the stored message was received; and including at least a portion of the subscriber information in the information signal in said generating step.

32. A method according to claim 1, including relating the stored message to a pre-selected graphical image associated with the source and pre-selected by the source.

33. A method according to claim 1, including alerting the communications device that an incoming message from the source is being stored and permitting the communications device to interrupt the storage of the incoming message and connect with the source.

34. An apparatus for identifying a source of a stored message, the apparatus comprising:

a generator for generating an information signal relating the stored message to at least one graphical image associated with said source; and

a transmitter for initiating transmission of the information signal to a communications device associated with an addressee of the stored message.

35. An apparatus according to claim 34, including a processor programmed to: (i) identify a network location where the at least one graphical image can be accessed by the addressee; and (ii) generate a representation of the network location within the information signal.

36. An apparatus according to claim 34, wherein said generator includes a message waiting notification server for producing the information signal.

37. An apparatus according to claim 34, including a processor programmed to initiate storage of at least a portion of the information within the information signal in a network resource.

38. An apparatus according to claim 34, including a computer server operative to communicate with a network resource where the at least one graphical image is stored.

39. An apparatus according to claim 38, wherein said transmitter is an integral component of said computer server.

40. An apparatus according to claim 34, including a receiver for receiving a request for a pending graphical notification from the addressee.

41. An apparatus according to claim 40, wherein said generator is programmed to process the request for a pending graphical notification.

42. An apparatus according to claim 41, wherein said transmitter is programmed to transmit the pending graphical notification to the communications device in the form of the information signal.

43. An apparatus according to claim 34, including a processor programmed to process a request from the communications device for the stored message.

5 44. An apparatus according to claim 34, including a processor programmed to process a representation of the at least one graphical image for inclusion in the information signal.

10 45. An apparatus according to claim 44, wherein said processor is programmed to generate the representation of the at least one graphical image.

15 46. An apparatus according to claim 44, wherein said processor is programmed to retrieve the representation of the at least one graphical image.

20 47. An apparatus according to claim 34, wherein said transmitter includes a processor programmed to instruct the communications device to add at least a portion of the information signal to a web page accessible to an end-user display device associated with the addressee.

25 48. An apparatus according to claim 34, wherein said generator includes a processor programmed to (i) identify a media type of the stored message, and (ii) include a digital image associated with the media type in the information signal.

30 49. An apparatus according to claim 34, including a processor programmed to reproduce within said information signal a representation of at least one video frame from a video stream associated with the source.

35 50. A system including the apparatus claimed in claim 34, and further comprising:

a network computer operative to receive an incoming signal associated with the stored message and to initiate generation of the information signal with said generator in response to the incoming signal.

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51. A system according to claim 50, wherein the network computer is programmed to communicate with the communications device via a network connection.

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52. A system according to claim 51, including the communications device.

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53. A system according to claim 52, wherein the communications device includes a processor programmed to receive and display the at least one graphical image.

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54. A system according to claim 53, wherein the processor is programmed to receive the at least one graphical image from the network computer.

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55. A system according to claim 53, wherein the processor is programmed to: (i) retrieve from the information signal a network location identifying where the at least one graphical image can be accessed; and (ii) retrieve from a network device located at the network location the at least one graphical image for display to the addressee.

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56. A computer readable medium including codes for:

(a) directing a network computer to generate an information signal relating a stored message to at least one graphical image associated with a source of the stored message; and

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(b) directing the network computer to transmit the information signal to a communications device associated with an addressee of the stored message.

5 57. A computer readable medium according to claim 56, wherein said codes include codes for directing the network computer to produce a representation of said at least one graphical image in the information signal.

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10 58. A computer readable medium according to claim 56, wherein said codes include codes for directing the network computer to (i) identify a network location where the at least one graphical image can be accessed by the addressee, and (ii) generate a representation of said network location
15 in the information signal.

59. A computer readable medium according to claim 56, wherein said codes include codes for directing the network computer to (i) retrieve a network address identifying a
20 network location where the at least one graphical image can be accessed and (ii) provide the network address in the information signal.

60. A computer readable medium according to claim 56, wherein said codes include codes for directing the network
25 computer to transmit the information signal to a network resource associated with the addressee.

61. A computer readable medium according to claim 56,
30 including codes for directing the network computer to initiate storage of at least a portion of the information signal for subsequent retrieval and transmission to the communications device.

35 62. A computer readable medium according to claim 56, including codes for directing the network computer to determine the source of the stored message.

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69. A computer readable medium according to claim 56, including codes for directing the network computer to reproduce within said information signal a representation of at least one video frame from a video stream associated with the source.

70. A computer readable medium according to claim 56, wherein said codes include codes for directing the network computer to: (i) transmit a control signal to a network resource for instructing the network resource to add at least a portion of the information represented in the information signal to a web page accessible to the communications device.

71. A computer readable medium according to claim 56, including codes for directing the network computer to relate the stored message to a pre-selected graphical image associated with the source and pre-selected by the source.

72. A computer readable medium according to claim 56, including codes for directing the network to alert the communications device that an incoming message from the source is being stored and permitting the communications device to interrupt the storage of the incoming message and connect with the source.

73. A method of indicating receipt of a stored message from a source, the method comprising:

generating an information signal relating the stored message to at least one of: (i) a graphical image associated with the source; and (ii) a digital representation of a sound waveform associated with the source; and

transmitting the information signal to a communications device associated with an addressee of the stored message.

5 74. A method according to claim 73, wherein said generating step includes relating, within the information signal, the stored message to a plurality of graphical images associated with the source.

10 75. A method according to claim 73, wherein said generating step includes relating, within the information signal, the stored message to a plurality of digital representations of sound waveforms associated with the source.

15 76. A method according to claim 73, wherein the stored message includes a stream of video data and said generating step includes producing within said information signal a digital representation of a plurality of video frames captured from the stream of video data so as to include within said information signal a video notification associated with the source.

20 77. A method according to claim 76, wherein the stream of video data includes audio data and wherein the digital representation of the at least one sound waveform is captured from said audio data.